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New York

President:	Ms. Rice	(United States of America)
Members:	Azerbaijan	Mr. Mehdiyev
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	Colombia	Mr. Osorio
	France	Mr. Araud
	Germany	Mr. Wittig
	Guatemala	Mr. Briz Gutiérrez
	India	Mr. Raguttahalli
	Morocco	Mr. Loulichki
	Pakistan	Mr. Tarar
	Portugal	Mr. Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zhukov
	South Africa	Mr. Sangqu
	Togo	Mr. Menan
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant

Agenda

The situation concerning Iraq

Second report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 2001 (2011) (S/2012/185)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning Iraq

Second report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 2001 (2011) (S/2012/185)

The President: Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Iraq to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Martin Kobler, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2012/185, which contains the second report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 2001 (2011).

I now give the floor to Mr. Kobler.

Mr. Kobler: It is a great pleasure to introduce the second report (S/2012/185) of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 2001 (2011) on the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), as well as the situation in the country.

Since my last briefing of the Security Council (see S/PV.6675), there have been several important developments in Iraq. The United States completed the withdrawal of its armed forces from the country on 31 December. The withdrawal has provided the democratically elected Government of Iraq with the opportunity to turn a new page in its history and assert its country's full sovereignty. On 29 March, Iraq hosted the League of Arab States summit. That historic event marked Iraq's re-emergence as a major actor in the region.

It is true that domestic political issues and the potential fallout from regional crises, such as the one ongoing in Syria, continue to pose obstacles for Iraq as it marches on the road to full recovery. The continued delays in convening the national conference underscore the urgent need for Iraqi leaders to summon the political will and courage to work together to solve the country's problems through an inclusive dialogue. In that regard, UNAMI will continue to remain steadfast in its commitment to assisting the Government and people of Iraq with addressing the major challenges facing their nation.

In many ways, the holding of the twenty-third League of Arab States summit in Baghdad on 29 March was a measure of how far Iraq has come after decades of war, dictatorship and economic hardship. The historic presence at the summit of the Emir of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, also highlighted the significant improvement in relations between Iraq and Kuwait. Iraq now stands to play a positive role in the region as it assumes the chairmanship of the Arab League as a fully independent and sovereign State. This represents an important opportunity to play a leading role in addressing some of the pressing issues of concern to Arab States and improving cooperation among them.

The recent steps taken by Iraq and Kuwait to normalize their relations and resolve all the issues remaining between them is encouraging. I am hopeful that this willingness to work together, and the practical steps already taken by the Government of Iraq to fulfil its outstanding obligations under Chapter VII of the Charter, will help bring closure to this long-standing problem.

On 14 March, the Iraqi Prime Minister Mr. Al-Maliki undertook an important two-day visit to Kuwait. As a result, Iraq agreed to proceed with the pending Iraq-Kuwait boundary maintenance project, pursuant to resolution 833 (1993), and to transfer its share of funds allocated for the project's completion to the United Nations immediately after Prime Minister Al-Maliki's visit. Most significantly, during the visit the two Governments agreed to resume their high-level bilateral talks and to hold the second Iraq-Kuwait high-level cooperation committee meeting this month. The meeting should provide both sides with an invaluable opportunity to review all pending bilateral issues, as well as Iraq's outstanding obligations under Chapter VII.

I commend the Kuwaiti and Iraqi Governments for their efforts to improve bilateral relations. Officials in both countries relayed their positions to the Secretary-General during his visit to Kuwait and Iraq at the end of March. In their meetings with the Secretary-General, both countries welcomed Mr. Al-Maliki's visit to Kuwait as a historic and

important step towards normalizing relations between them. During his visit, the Secretary-General urged the Iraqi Government to continue to work to fulfil all its obligations pursuant to all relevant outstanding United Nations resolutions under Chapter VII. I will continue to assist in expediting the normalization of relations between the two countries, including by further visits to Kuwait.

The continuing violence in Syria is fraught with risks that could have dangerous spillover effects on Iraq, affecting its fragile balance of power and increasing communal tensions. In addition, it has already begun to have an impact on Iraqi refugees in Syria. The United Nations country team has therefore undertaken extensive contingency planning to mitigate possible problems.

I took up my functions as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq some six months ago. Since then, I have expanded my consultations with political leaders of all elements of Iraqi society and with representatives of the political parties, including several visits to the Kurdistan region and other governorates.

Such political facilitation and outreach have become all the more important in the light of the tensions that have arisen between the main parliamentary blocs in Iraq, and which have developed into a political impasse. I have therefore encouraged Iraqi political parties and leaders to work together in a spirit of partnership towards finding the common ground that will help them resolve their differences. In that regard, Al-Iraqiya's decision to end its boycott of the Council of Ministers and the Council of Representatives was the right step.

It was President Talabani's suggestion to hold a national conference as a way to help put an end to the stalemate. So far, unfortunately, there has been no agreement on an agenda. An inclusive forum, however, is needed as a first step towards ending the political impasse. I call on all Iraqi leaders to sit down together to address all their differences in a meaningful way. UNAMI stands ready to continue to support such efforts.

Arab-Kurdish relations in general, and issues pertaining to the disputed internal boundaries in particular, remain at the heart of UNAMI's mandate. In that regard, the Standing Consultation Mechanism launched by UNAMI was an important forum for addressing the issue of disputed internal boundaries. Regrettably, the series of political crises has made it difficult for the Mechanism to convene. Redoubling our efforts to facilitate progress on the issue of Kirkuk, my Deputy and I have made it a priority to pay regular visits to the area to promote political dialogue between the parties. During my most recent visit to Kirkuk, all the interlocutors, including the Governor, the Deputy Governor and the Provincial Council Chairman, emphasized the importance of holding provincial elections in Kirkuk as soon as possible and of the need for the United Nations to play a facilitation role in those and other outstanding issues.

It goes without saying that there can be no true democracy without free, fair and competitive elections. This makes UNAMI's work of providing electoral support all the more important for consolidating democracy in Iraq. At the request of the Council of Representatives, UNAMI has been serving as adviser and observer in the selection process of the Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission before the expiration this month of the current Board's term. The participation of UNAMI and non-governmental organizations in the selection process is a clear signal that the process's transparency can be assured.

The final vote and selection of the nine new Commissioners, which was expected by the end of this month, is now unlikely to take place. In order, however, to avoid delays in the upcoming elections in the Kurdistan region in September and in the provincial elections in early 2013, the Council of Representatives has been encouraged to extend the mandate of the current Board of Commissioners so as to enable it to initiate preparations for holding those contests.

I would like to highlight specific concerns I have about the human rights situation in Iraq, particularly in terms of, first, civilian casualties; secondly, gender-based violence and women; thirdly, the situation minorities; and fourthly, internally displaced persons (IDPs).

I am concerned that Iraq's political situation is heightening communal tensions in the country and leading to an increase in the numbers of attacks on civilians. Since my most recent briefing to the Council, terrorist attacks have continued to target pilgrims and resulted in the killing and wounding of scores of

defenceless people practicing their religion. Other attacks across the country have indiscriminately targeted civilians, resulting in large numbers of deaths and injuries, including of children. In the first three months of 2012, a total of 613 civilians were killed and 1,800 injured. This is slightly less than civilians casualties last year; however every man, woman and child dying in terrorist attacks in the streets, markets or mosques of Iraq is one casualty too many. Such horrendous crimes against the Iraqi people need to stop and the violence must end if Iraq is to achieve the prosperous and secure future its people deserve.

Women's History Month was celebrated last month, but statistics indicate that Iraqi women continue to face widespread instances of gender-based violence, including domestic violence and so-called honour killings. Many of the issues related to the violation of the rights of women and girls arise from entrenched cultural traditions and social practices. It is the duty of Iraqi leaders to act responsibly and in unity to end the ongoing violence against women and girls.

In recent months, I have expanded my regular consultations with representatives of all minority communities around the country, including Christians, Shabaks, Sabean Mandeans and Yazidis. I would like to emphasize that violence against minorities is unacceptable and should have no place in Iraq as it moves forward on the path of consolidating democratic governance. UNAMI is able to provide support to the Iraqi authorities in protecting Iraq's ethnic and religious communities, and in promoting their rights in accordance with the Constitution, including fair representation in the political system in Iraq.

Despite the return of some 1 million internally displaced Iraqis since 2003, large numbers of individuals continue to be unable or unwilling to return to their places of origin. According to Government figures, there are still more than 1.3 million post-2006 displaced persons, representing more than 220,000 families. Baghdad hosts the largest number, with over 300,000 persons in almost 60,000 families. We can best help restore the rights of those who fled violence in recent years by ensuring their safe return to their homes. All Iraqis, including those displaced, are entitled to live in dignity. The United Nations is working to ensure that the displaced are adequately cared for as long as they are displaced, followed by their voluntary return, resettlement and local integration.

On the positive side, I am pleased to report that yesterday, 9 April, the Council of Representatives voted to endorse the commissioners to serve on Iraq's first independent High Commission for Human Rights. The importance of this institution cannot be underestimated, as it will serve as the first Iraqi-owned and led human rights institution and will form the cornerstone for promoting and protecting human rights in Iraq. The Government has taken steps to address human rights challenges by appointing a committee to oversee implementation of the National Action Plan on Human Rights, which was adopted by the Government in December 2011. The Government must build on these positive steps to do all that it can to ensure that its human rights obligations are met.

As I mentioned to the Council during my previous briefing, in moving forward with our integrated approach the United Nations country team will focus on three priority issues during the coming year. These are youth, water resource management and the environment. Making progress on these issues has the potential to improve the political, security and governance situations. We have embarked on efforts aimed at sensitizing the Government and people of Iraq to the role of youth in the socio-economic recovery of Iraq. Water and environment remain critical issues for the development in Iraq. I call on Iraq and its neighbouring countries to work together on finding a durable solution to managing their shared water resources.

A year ago, on 8 April 2011, the tragic incidents in Camp Ashraf led to the deaths of dozens of the camp's residents and to hundreds being injured. In an effort to reach a peaceful and durable solution, UNAMI and the Government of Iraq signed a memorandum of understanding on 25 December 2011. The Government of Iraq agreed to extend the deadline for the closure of the camp. From mid-February until now, almost 1,200 residents of Camp New Iraq have been safely relocated to the temporary transit location in Camp Hurriya, near Baghdad. United Nations monitors are deployed to monitor both the relocation and the situation in Camp Hurriya around the clock. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has a team at Camp Hurriya to carry out the verification and adjudication of claims for refugee status.

I wish to make it clear that the memorandum of understanding concerns voluntary relocation, and that

its implementation is based firmly on all sides acting peacefully and in good faith. It should be noted that, on 8 April, an incident took place at Camp New Iraq during the preparation for the fourth transfer of residents. A confrontation developed; United Nations monitors now report that the situation has returned to calm. Both sides have now resumed cooperation in preparation for the next transfer.

I would have loved to have reported that another group of 400 residents had moved to Camp Hurriya. This incident, however, momentarily disrupted the relocation. But, as we speak, United Nations monitors are at Camp Hurriya and Camp New Iraq, and I am pleased to report that the next 400 residents will move immediately once the loading of the person's belongings is completed. This is a sign of the good will of the residents. I will continue to be actively engaged in ensuring that an understanding is reached on the remaining issues. With this move, half of the residents of Camp New Iraq will have been relocated to Camp Hurriya.

I would like to take this opportunity to make the following four further remarks. First, I would like to commend the Iraqi authorities, in particular Prime Minister Al-Maliki and his advisors, as well as the commanding General, the many Iraqi policemen and the Iraqi army, for their patience and cooperation in ensuring the safe and secure relocation of the first three groups of residents. I encourage them to pursue the relocation of the remaining residents in a manner that guarantees the residents' human rights, safety and security, and to avoid anything that could be seen as a provocation. We will do everything possible to assist the Government of Iraq in relocating the remaining residents. There are, however, still major obstacles ahead that might require flexibility on the deadline.

Secondly, I would like also to highlight that the camp residents, despite initial difficulties, have recently shown good will and cooperation in the relocation process. The residents have indeed come a long way. It is difficult to abandon a place where one has lived for more than two decades. I encourage the residents to continue to show good will and to work in a cooperative spirit.

Thirdly and most importantly, I reiterate my call on Member States to accept the residents of the camp in their countries. Now that UNHCR has begun its work, it is high time for the international community to accept eligible candidates and fund the relocation process. The support of the international community is urgently needed. I welcomed the joint UNHCR/UNAMI resettlement conference, which took place in Geneva on 23 March. More than 30 Member States participated. However, no country has committed to accepting residents. A donors appeal meeting also took place the same day, seeking to raise $39 million for the Ashraf project. Only one Member State made a concrete pledge. That falls far below what we had hoped. Without international support, the process cannot succeed.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my colleagues in UNAMI, UNHCR and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for their hard work and support. The Ashraf file placed a heavy burden on the Mission. I could count on the support of most of my colleagues. My admiration goes to the monitoring staff in Camp Hurriya and the UNHCR staff, in particular those who accompanied the convoys under truly dangerous conditions. As stated by the Secretary-General in his report, the process is still fragile and instances of violence cannot be excluded. We must therefore remain vigilant.

Coming to the end, I should like to highlight that, following the withdrawal of United States troops, there are now greater expectations for UNAMI to assist the Government and people of Iraq in addressing the major challenges facing their nation. Unfortunately, this comes at a time when resources made available to UNAMI have been shrinking.

I wish to take this opportunity to stress my personal commitment and that of my team in Baghdad to continuing to do our utmost to implement our comprehensive mandate from the Security Council in the areas of political facilitation, electoral support, human rights, reconstruction and development. I firmly believe that United Nations assistance at this critical juncture in Iraq's history remains essential.

I should like to conclude by thanking the members of the Council for their continued support, as well as the Government of Iraq and the wider membership of the United Nations. I should also like to express my gratitude and appreciation to my colleagues at UNAMI and in the United Nations family for their efforts, dedication and perseverance under very difficult working conditions in Iraq.

The President: I thank Mr. Kobler for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Madame, and your country on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I am sure that your leadership skills and talents will help to achieve the objectives of the Security Council this month. I would like to also extend my thanks to the previous Security Council President, the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, for his efforts during the month of March. I would also like to thank Mr. Martin Kobler, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, and his team in Baghdad and New York for their sincere efforts in helping the people and Government of Iraq.

Having reviewed the report of the Secretary-General on UNAMI's work in Iraq (S/2012/185), I would like to present the following comments.

On the political level, the convening of the twenty-third regular session of the Arab summit in Baghdad on 29 March 2012 was a milestone for Iraq's return to its positive regional role and its integration into the Arab world after long years of isolation imposed on it following Saddam's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. The summit was attended by presidents and leaders of Arab countries and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Iraq asked the Arab States to agree on a new vision for the relationships among Arab States in light of the great transformations in the region on the political, social, cultural and security levels. The absence of such a vision shall put us in complex situations that no country would be able to deal with alone. The summit adopted the Baghdad Declaration, which includes the positions of the Arab leaders regarding important regional and international issues.

The completion of the withdrawal of United States forces from all Iraqi territory, in accordance with the schedules agreed upon between Iraq and the United States in the status-of-forces agreement, is a historic victory for the option of negotiations, adopted by Iraq during a difficult and sensitive period of its modern history as it dealt with the issue of the presence of foreign troops. The withdrawal helped to establish a new era in the relationship between Iraq and the United States, where the Strategic Framework Agreement is the cornerstone of bilateral relations between the two countries. That agreement deals with political, economic, commercial, cultural, scientific and other fields in order to drive bilateral relations to greater cooperation and understanding in the next phase, which we firmly believe will be balanced between two sovereign nations on the basis of common interests.

The withdrawal of United States forces helped Iraq to host the Arab summit in Baghdad as some Arab countries that severed diplomatic relations with Iraq after Saddam's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 refused to restore diplomatic relations with Iraq after 2003 or to open their embassies in Baghdad so long as there were foreign forces in the country. Following the withdrawal of foreign troops, Iraq is moving now to a new stage in the democratic political process, based on the Constitution and the rule of law in resolving all problems, and focusing on building and developing the economy and on strengthening efforts to establish better relationships with other countries based on mutual respect, common interests and non-interference in internal affairs. Iraqis today have a new Iraq that enjoys complete sovereignty, independence and free will, which have been achieved by the awareness and determination of the Iraqi people.

Under the auspices of Mr. Jalal Talabani, President of the Republic of Iraq, the Iraqi political groups agreed on 6 February 2012 to achieve a national consensus to fulfil the aspirations of all the Iraqi people. They agreed on four guiding principles to continue the political process under the framework of the Iraqi Constitution, which are, first, standing as one bloc against terrorism and armed groups; secondly, the Constitution is the basis for the settlement of disputes and that all shall abide by it; thirdly, all components of the Iraqi people should be fully represented in the political process; fourthly and finally, the Iraqi judiciary is an independent authority and it is on an equal level with other authorities and must remain free from political interference.

The Vice-President of the Republic of Iraq, Mr. Khodair Al-Khozaei, met with the members of preparatory committee of the national conference on 12 February 2012. Yhey agreed on the general framework of the agenda of the conference and the formation of subcommittees to study all the issues discussed in preparation for the national conference. I can assure the States members of the Security Council that Iraqis never fail to settle their disputes through peaceful means and negotiations. They learn in the new democracy to shout at each other instead of shooting at

each other and to resort to ballot boxes rather than bullet boxes.

In the framework of the tireless efforts made by the Iraqi Government to grant more powers to provincial councils, the Council of Ministers headed by Mr. Nuri Kamel Al-Maliki, Prime Minister of Iraq, held a session in the province of Basra for the first time in the history of that province. During that session, a series of decisions were made to strengthen the powers of the provinces. In the conference on decentralization in Iraq, which was held on 27 February 2012, the Prime Minister stressed the need to give local Governments more power in the reconstruction field, which is the demand of many provinces in Iraq.

The achievement of security and stability was and remains a central priority in the work programme of the national partnership Government. That was clearly embodied in the Iraqi security forces' ability to take full responsibility for the security of the country before and after the withdrawal of foreign forces, which is reflected clearly in the lower level of violence across the country. The Prime Minister, during his meeting with senior security chiefs on 1 February, stressed the need to work to ensure measures to control the security situation and fill all possible gaps that terrorists are trying to use to destabilize the country. He also called for more coordination and cooperation between local governments, the military and security forces.

On the social and economic levels, on 8 March the Council of Representatives ratified the federal budget for 2012, with a total value of about $100 billion, which reflects an increase of approximately 20 per cent from the federal budget for 2011. At the same time, the Iraqi economy has been witnessing notable improvement in its basic indicators since 2003, such as the unemployment rate, which fell from 51 per cent to 15 per cent; the poverty rate, which fell from 54 per cent to 23 per cent; and the inflation rate, which fell from 65 per cent to 6 per cent.

With the backing of Prime Minister Al-Maliki, the Supreme National Committee for the agricultural initiative in Iraq held a meeting on 4 January 2012 in which the ways to achieve further development in the agricultural sector in Iraq were discussed in the light of the phenomena of drought and climate change. In that context, the federal budget for 2012 allocated approximately $500 million to support for agricultural projects and for the advancement of the agricultural sector in Iraq.

On 1 March, the Prime Minister of Iraq visited the Ministry of Electricity to follow up on the Ministry's efforts to provide electric power to citizens. During his meeting with officials in the Ministry, he called for more cooperation and coordination between the Ministries of Oil and Electricity in order to provide fuel to power stations and facilitate the entry into Iraq of materials for the electricity sector. It should be noted that electricity production has seen a noticeable increase from 3,500 megawatts in 2003 to around 7,500 megawatts in 2012. However, the sharp rise in living standards and the salaries of Iraqi citizens has caused a huge increase of electricity consumption and demand, and the Government is trying to solve the problem.

Under the auspices of Prime Minister Al-Maliki, the first floating port in the province of Basra has been inaugurated, with an export capacity amounting to 850,000 barrels per day. The port represents one of the five ports to be constructed with a capacity of 850,000 barrels a day each. In a related matter, the rate of Iraqi oil production has continued to increase and amounted to 2.358 million barrels per day in 2010 and 2.653 million barrels per day in 2011. The Iraqi Government is planning to further increase production in 2012.

The Iraqi Government has allocated $85 million from the federal budget for 2012 to fund programmes in partnership with the international community, including the specialized agencies of the United Nations, in order to implement a range of projects related to the United Nations development framework for Iraq.

On the human rights level, the Council of Representatives ratified the creation of the Independent High Commission for Human Rights in Iraq on 9 April. That step is a milestone in improving human rights situation in the new Iraq and was designed to improve Iraq's human rights record and its ongoing programmes to promote respect for and the protection and advancement of human rights, to ensure people's enjoyment of those rights, to establish democratic life and to support human development.

In the framework of the efforts made by the Iraqi Government to determine the fate of missing persons who were victims of Saddam's brutal regime, the

Ministry of Human Rights signed on 12 March a memorandum of understanding with the International Commission on Missing Persons. The agreement was signed in order to enable Iraqis to carry out DNA tests on the remains of victims buried in mass graves, identify those remains and return them to their families after years of suffering from not knowing the fate of their loved ones.

On 5 March, the presidency of the Republic of Iraq ratified Law No. 16 of 2012 concerning the formal accession of Iraq to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the General Assembly in 2006. The Convention was ratified to ensure and promote the right of persons with disabilities to enjoy fundamental rights in a way that preserves their human dignity.

In the framework of the efforts made by the Iraqi Government in the empowerment of Iraqi women, Iraq has withdrawn its reservation on article 9 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in accordance with the provisions of article 8, part II of the Iraqi Constitution. The latter article grants a child born to an Iraqi woman the same right to obtain Iraqi citizenship as a child born to an Iraqi man. In the era of the Saddam regime, only children born to Iraqi men could obtain Iraqi citizenship.

Within the framework of the efforts made by Iraqi Government to develop the education sector in Iraq, the Prime Minister announced the near launch of a national strategy for education aimed at creating the right foundation for a road map for the improvement of education in the country and at strengthening cooperation with international institutions and organizations concerned with education.

On the regional and international levels, Saudi Arabia and Oman have appointed non-resident ambassadors to Iraq, while Palestine has appointed a resident ambassador, each of whose credential letters were received by President Jalal Talabani on 27 March. Iraq welcomes those appointments and emphasizes the Iraqi Government's intention to strengthen relations with Arab countries and fortify joint Arab cooperation and solidarity.

On 11 March, Mr. Hoshyar Zebari, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Egyptian Foreign Minister Mohamed Amr signed an agreement at the Egyptian Foreign Ministry to immediately pay the money owed to Egyptians who had worked in Iraq in the past but had not been paid by the former regime.

On 16 February, the Council of Representatives ratified the Iraqi National Monitoring Directorate to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. That step fulfilled Iraq's obligation arising from resolution 1957 (2010).

Iraq, which endured and suffered from Al-Qaida and its affiliated terrorist groups before other countries, warns the entire international community to remain vigilant that the wave of Arab revolutions not be hijacked by Al-Qaida or other terrorist groups. Otherwise, people who are struggling for freedom, pluralism and justice will discover that extremist groups have stolen their spring, dreams and aspirations, distorted the great principles for which they fought, and tarnished the image of Islam and the values and principles of patriotism.

A great deal of blood has been shed under the banner of resisting the occupation in Iraq, and thousands of civilians have been killed, although those civilian were not part of any occupying force. Car bombs and suicide attacks continued even after the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Iraq, which proves that fighting the occupation was simply a pretext used by terrorists to shed the blood of Iraqi citizens.

Since the outbreak of the crisis in Syria, Iraq has upheld its rejection of the military option in dealing with the Syrian people's demands for freedom, democracy and political pluralism. We have called on the Syrian Government and the opposition to shun the military option in order to avoid seeing convoys of Syrian victims, civilian and military alike, because it will ultimately exacerbate the conflict and throw the country into civil war. History and a sense of moral responsibility urge all of us to work to contain the violence and the fire raging in Syria. We must exert pressure on both sides of the conflict to engage in a national dialogue, which we believe is the best option for resolving the crisis in Syria. Iraq strongly supports the efforts made by the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, Mr. Kofi Annan, to contain the crisis and resolve it peacefully within a national framework.

With the help of UNAMI, and in particular the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Martin Kobler, 1,200 members of the People's

Mujahedin Organization of Iran have been transferred from Camp Ashraf to Camp Liberty. The Iraqi Government urges the Security Council to help relocate those persons to other countries as the Iraqi Government cannot allow them to stay in Iraq, in accordance with the Iraqi Constitution.

On the situation between Iraq and Kuwait, Prime Minister Nuri Al-Maliki visited the State of Kuwait on 14 February and met His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Emir of Kuwait. I am pleased to inform the estimated members of the Security Council that that visit brought about the final and comprehensive settlement of many issues, including the claims against Iraqi Airways by the Government of Kuwait. The visit also emphasized Iraq's fulfilment of its obligations under relevant Security Council resolutions, including the payment of Iraq's share of $600,000 to the United Nations to cover the expenses of the border pillar maintenance project and find a just solution to the problems of Iraqi farmers. The visit also witnessed an agreement to secure free navigation in Khawr Abdallah, through cooperation and coordination between the two countries. I am also pleased to inform Council members that Iraq and Kuwait have agreed to hold the second session of the Joint Ministerial Committee on 29 April of this year in Baghdad to consider all outstanding issues, particularly the issues of compensation, missing persons and Kuwaiti properties.

My Government believes that that historic visit — which was described by the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, during his visit to Kuwait on 28 March 2012, as an important step — and the results achieved mark the beginning of a new stage of bilateral relations between Iraq and Kuwait based on mutual trust and will contribute to strengthening cooperation between the two countries.

In conclusion, I would like to stress my Government's gratitude to the members of the Security Council and for the role of UNAMI in Iraq, as well as for the efforts made by Mr. Martin Kobler and the UNAMI team in Iraq and the United Nations to provide the support requested by the Iraqi Government, in accordance with the mechanisms agreed upon between the two sides.

The President: There are no more speakers inscribed on my list.

I now invite members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on this subject.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.